

Guy Barnett MP

Attorney General
Minister for Justice
Minister for Health
Minister for Veterans' Affairs
Liberal Member for Lyons



Tasmanian Government **Media Release**

1 December 2023

Guy Barnett, Attorney-General

Government's response to Commission of Inquiry's final report

The Tasmanian Government's response to the Commission of Inquiry's Report into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings has been delivered.

Attorney-General Guy Barnett said there is no greater priority for the Rockliff Liberal Government than ensuring children and young people are safe.

"We are indebted to the brave victim-survivors and advocates who spoke out to ensure children and young people's voices were heard, and the injustices and failings over the past 22 years were uncovered," Attorney-General Barnett said.

"Our Government is unwavering in its commitment to implement all 191 recommendations outlined by the Commission.

"The Response released today outlines a staged approach for the implementation of these recommendations and outlines the projected timeline and status for each of the recommendations.

"Of the 191 recommendations, 83 per cent of these (158) will be completed by 1 July 2026, including 48 priority actions to be completed by 1 July next year.

"In many cases, we have started work on these reforms already, and if we can get them done sooner, we will."

This includes the significant commitment to deliver 54 legislative reforms, being led by the Department of Justice.

Critically, the State's Child and Youth Safe Organisations framework and Reportable Conduct Scheme is set to commence on 1 January 2024, following the successful passage of the related Bill through Parliament earlier this year – which will dramatically increase accountability and transparency of all organisations engaging with children and young people.

These reforms have been progressed ahead of the Commission's Report, making Tasmania the third jurisdiction to have these important safeguards in place, ahead of most other States and Territories.

We have also already progressed a large body of criminal and civil justice reforms to increase protections and penalties for child sexual abuse related offences, with further work now underway to ensure we continue to strengthen our laws and justice system.

"This extensive legislative agenda will further strengthen access to justice, improve protections, streamline processes and improve reporting mechanisms across government agencies to ensure the utmost safety for children and young people."

"I want to assure the Tasmanian community that as Minister for Health, I am also deeply committed to taking all necessary measures to ensure the safety, and wellbeing of our children and young people in healthcare settings. This is why we have not waited to take action to strengthen child safety in our hospitals and health system, and are already implementing a significant body of work including mandated child safety training, structural changes to reset executive culture, accountability of leadership and frameworks for reporting child safety concerns.

"We know transforming government institutions, systems, culture, and rebuilding trust, will take time, investment and a commitment to deliver, but I want to be very clear: we will safeguard our children and young people, now and into the future.

"Importantly, over the next six months the Tasmanian Government will develop a detailed Child Sexual Abuse Reform Strategy and Action Plan, which will be released in July 2024. During this period, the Government will continue to listen and learn from those with lived experience to inform this work.

"To ensure community feedback underpins this work, we have engaged the National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse to create Tasmanian-specific data. This will enable us to gain further insight into the unique challenges within our state and tailor our responses accordingly."

\$2.4 million is being allocated to appoint an independent monitor to hold the Government to account for its progress on delivering the Commission's recommendations and broader reforms, and this will be the first order of business when Parliament returns next year.

"The Rockliff Liberal Government has already invested more than \$55 million to keep children safe since the Commission began its work and this funding has led to important changes in the way services are delivered, with 17 of the 30 Keeping Children Safe actions already complete and work well underway on the remaining actions," Attorney-General Barnett said.

Actions already delivered include:

- created new crimes related to child sexual abuse, including 'failing to protect a child or young person' and 'sexual abuse of a child or young person by a person in authority';
- removed all limitation periods for child sexual offences, including for the summary offence of 'assault with indecent intent';

- provided greater support for victims engaging in the justice system, through our witness intermediary services and removal of limitation periods for victims of crime applications;
- established two pilot multidisciplinary Arch Centres in the north and south, bringing together specialist family violence services, sexual assault services, and police and prosecution services under one roof, with planning underway on a third in the North-West; and
- rollout of trauma-informed training across the State Service.

“While today’s response is a significant milestone, we know there is much work ahead of us,” Attorney-General Barnett said.

“We all share a responsibility to deliver the changes necessary to safeguard our children and young people, for now and for generations to come, and we approach this task with commitment and compassion.”

The Government’s Response and progress on the Government’s implementation of the recommendations will also be available at www.keepingchildrensafe.tas.gov.au

If you need support, contact the services listed below, which are free and confidential. Support is available by phone and/or face-to-face:

- Lifeline 13 11 14 or www.lifelinetasmania.org.au
- Tasmanian Lifeline 1800 98 44 34
- State-wide Sexual Assault Support Line (Sexual Assault Support Service and Laurel House) 1800 697 877

Relationships Australia Tasmania 1300 364 277